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True and False Proclamation in the Book of Revelation (part 2)

Gordon Campbell

Driven by the twin convictions that the Book of Revelation exhibits considerable thematic cohesion and that all its major themes are shaped by carefully sustained use of literary contrasts, this article pursues the reading-strategy adopted in part 1 and traces one such theme – *true and false proclamation* – through to the end of the book.

(For a brief justification of the approach adopted here, a preliminary sketch of the chosen theme and an exploration of its role in Revelation prior to 11:1, see part 1 of this article.)

Associates of the Faithful Witness (ch.11:1 – 12:18). The ministry of the two witnesses¹ prior to their demise (11:7) meshes with the experience of Old Covenant witnesses (11:5,6) whose testimony was regulated by the principle of double or multiple witness (No.35:30; Dt.17:6; 19:15)² – the plagues of 15:1ff will constitute a word like that of a Moses before Pharaoh, testifying against those who will not heed God, or like the affirmations of an

¹ Interpretative questions raised by the two witnesses well exceed the scope of this article. A good introduction to the critical issues and an in-depth treatment of 11:1-13 and its place within the account of the three woes, remains C.H. Giblin, 'Revelation 11.1-13: Its Form, Function, and Contextual Integration', *NTS* 30, 1984, 433-59.

² Thus Trites, *op.cit.*, p.168: "By means of dual evidence Christ's witnesses will sustain their case and thwart every accuser, including both the Roman delator and the arch-persecutor, Satan himself."

Elijah before Jezebel (confirmed by heavenly fire, or a sky without rain). The Gospels remind us, too, of how Jesus dispatched his disciple-spokesmen two by two (Lk.10:1). Olive trees in Israel (cf. Zac.4:2,3) or lamp-stands in the Church (11:4), these witnesses will receive the same portion as the Messiah; shamefully killed and dishonoured where he had been scourged and crucified (11:8), their lot will closely parallel his in four supplementary ways :-

- i) by the universal nature of their target audience that is, all humanity (11:9,10);³
- ii) by the resurrection which they, too, will undergo (11:11);
- iii) by their ascension in a cloud (11:12);⁴ and finally
- iv) by the fruit of their testimony, which is partial repentance (11:13).⁵

Such parallelism makes the witnesses participants in Christ's triumph; they belong to Jesus (1:5; 3:14), the witness faithful unto death and victorious over death (5:6-14), so their testimony and their life's work correspond to his.⁶

³ This is noted by M. Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John*, London, 1940, p.176.

⁴ The reference is vague; it could echo Elijah's assumption or Jesus' ascension (II R.2:11; Lc.24:51 and Ac.1:9).

⁵ This improves on the total hardening of the survivors in 9:20! With R. Bauckham, op.cit., p.280, a minority of interpreters read the 'fear' expressed here positively (it is a means to salvation) because, with the exception of the expression *μη φοβοῦ* (1:17; 2:10), *φοβεῖσθαι* is always positive in Revelation. However a contrary view is well defended by G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 1999, pp.597-607.

⁶ Cf. *ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ* which can mean either Jesus' own testimony (a subjective genitive) or the witness of others to him (an objective genitive).

Significant details of ch.12 carry the plot forward. The destiny of the male child (12:5ff), in conjunction with a second reference to Ps.2:8,9 (see also 2:26,27), anticipates the King of kings' victory over the kings of the earth (17:14); it also prepares, more immediately, for Michael's legal victory (12:10) which itself reflects the verdict secured by the faithful witness over against his enemies (19:11), in ratification of his triumph at the cross. As a result the satanic role of accuser, in heaven, can be declared to be defunct (12:10), even if the legal battle with Christians continues on the earth (as ch.13 will show), while the witnesses' earthly victory may already be counted upon as won (12:11).⁷ Those who have put their life on the line, whose conduct is epitomized as obedience to God's commands and loyalty to Jesus' testimony (12:17), take their stand alongside the martyr-witnesses of 6:9-11, 7:9ff and 11:3-12 and complete Revelation's characterisation of Christ's attestants. All have died and triumphed exactly as did their Lord, for Christ's past victory at Calvary has been renewed in theirs.

These various factors weigh more heavily with the reader than do the risk of imprisonment or the sword which every witness must face;⁸ the satan in John's story may captivate the vast majority of earth-dwellers, but his reprieve is only limited and since God no longer consults him, he remains a poor parody of Christians' advocate with the Father. It is thus a thwarted and defeated snake/devil/satan, ignominiously ejected from God's presence with his angels, who leads the whole earth astray (12:9). During the time-lapse given over to witnessing, he will indeed stalk the earth, pursue the woman and her offspring (12:13ss) and lurk by the edge

Two very recent interpretations share our approach: cf. Beale, *op.cit.*, p.567, and now J.W. Marshall, *Parables of War: Reading John's Jewish Apocalypse*, Waterloo, 2001, pp.145,46: "The 'two witnesses' ... can be understood as minor types of Jesus who bear the witness that Jesus bore."

⁷ W.J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Collegeville, 1993, p.134, puts it rather nicely: "The victims become victors."

⁸ Similarly J. Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Zurich, 1987, p.159.

of the sea (12:18). However, in the limited theatre of operations that are earth and ocean his stratagems (12:12) may be cheerfully endured; because of the cross, his 'victories' barely disguise his defeat and the faithful now face only a defending counsel (cf. I Jn.2:1,2).

An elaborate hoax (ch.13:1-18). If John's reader constantly bears in mind foregoing developments in the apocalyptic narrative, then it becomes feasible to grasp both the subtlety and scope of the double caricature of Jesus' testimony and his followers' witness which is about to be revealed: Bogus witnesses, phoney proclamation and fake miracles performed by false prophets⁹ all conspire to mount a counter-offensive to the revelation, transmission and confession of God's truth. Ch.11 has made it clear that faithful testimony to Jesus and satanic harassment of the witnesses run concurrently. It is vital to hold on to the thread of this plot, for idolatrous and cynical propaganda that parrots witness to the true God must not be mistaken for the real thing, as could all too easily happen in the complexities and ambiguities of life in John's narrative world. The issue is where to find truth and how to recognize it.¹⁰

For reasons of space we must take for granted, here, the second monster's close relationship to the first and their joint substitution for the dragon, as well as the way in which this monstrous duo parodies the Lamb;¹¹ this frees us to approach 13:1-18 mainly from the standpoint of the second monster and false prophet, a master deceiver who cajoles humans into worshipping the first beast. Essentially a false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10), the second beast's

⁹ Counterfeit signs are always in the plural (13:14; 16:14; 19:20), whereas the singular σημεῖον refers to what John sees in his vision (12:1,3; 15:1). Compare P. Prigent, *L'Apocalypse de St. Jean*, Geneva, 2000³, pp.183,84.

¹⁰ See Rowland, *op.cit.*, p.114.

¹¹ On the latter point, see my article 'Un procédé de composition', *op.cit.* For the former, the exegetical tradition starts with Irenaeus and finds classical critical expression in the commentary of R.H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, Edinburgh, 1920, p.357.

being, speech and actions all merit our attention. The mimicry of its two lamb-like horns obviously ape the Lamb but also convey deliberate guile: Since this monster has the dragon's voice, its horns identify it to the discerning reader as an opponent of the Word, a satanic propagandist hostile to God's true witness and to his fellow-witnesses.¹² The amalgam of matching horns and contradictory voice both hides and shows the antagonistic nature of a monster whose activity caricatures apostolic proclamation by mocking the ministry and authority of the Risen One's successors (13:12a), faking their accredited testimony to his resurrection (13:12b) and embodying a pseudo-messianic royalty which parodies the reign of God displayed in their signs and wonders (13:13).¹³

Looking more closely at the monsters' team-work, we discover in their combined actions as dummy risen one and sham spirit an imitation of the joint roles of Christ and the Spirit throughout the septet of oracles. As the Paraclete defers to Christ, so the second monster promotes its pseudo-truth by drawing people to the first (Jn.14:16-27). The land monster is an activist (13:12-16) in the cause of the sea monster and the dragon, and his deeds are those of a phoney spirit¹⁴ determined to copy prophetic inspiration by the Spirit of God. It performs in the presence of the first monster (13:12,14) just as true prophets do before the Lord of all the earth (11:4; cf. Elijah, I Ki.17:1, 18:15; the two witnesses, Zac.4:14), bolstering its message (13:13,14) with counterfeit miracles that evoke Elijah (cf. I Ki.18:38). It is an anti-spirit, breathing out a sort of life-giving infernal spirit (13:15), and a false prophet animating an icon by its trickery and gathering around it a sort of prophetic anti-community.

¹² Compare H.B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, London, 1907, p.169, and more recently Beasley-Murray, op.cit., p.216.

¹³ Here I am following R.W. Wall, *Revelation*, Peabody, 1991, p.172, who locates in Acts each of the three aspects of apostolic ministry satirised here: (i) Ac.1:1-11; (ii) Ac.2:22-36; and (iii) Ac.2:14-21/5:12/ 15:4,12.

¹⁴ See the suggestive summary given by D. Ford, *Crisis!* (3 vols.), Newcastle, 1982, pp.571,72.

The second monster is thus a powerful propagandist and liar and a fitting antagonist for the Word of God, Jesus' prophetic witness.¹⁵ Closer attention to its characteristics bears this out. The true prophet exercises his role before God whose word he speaks and whose will he does. By contrast this impostor operates in presence of the sea monster (13:12,14; cf. 19:20) from which its authority is derived and to which it answers. It coaxes earth-dwellers into superstitious veneration of the monster with the healed wound (13:12), which is patently worship of a false crucified-and-risen one. Its propaganda is a counterfeit gospel backed up by the sort of equivocal signs warned about from the Pentateuch onwards (Ex.7:11; Dt.13:1) and associated with false messiahs or pseudo-prophets by Jesus (Mk.13:22 and par.) and by his apostles (2 Th.2:9,10).¹⁶ Good News is proven true whenever liberating actions accompany its proclamation; a bogus gospel is seen to be illusory if signs confirm its capacity to enslave, and it is indeed bondage for earth's inhabitants which results from this message (13:12).

In the story, all onlookers see fire come down from heaven but none recognizes the hocus-pocus. The reader, however, should know better, being forewarned by Moses and Jesus that the most spectacular of signs corroborating true prophetic testimony – such as Elijah's fire at Mt. Carmel, pentecostal fire (Ac.2:3,4) and perhaps most of all, the devouring fire of true witness (in Rev.11:5¹⁷) – may all be faked. Unlike those the monster has branded (cf. 19:20), the reader need not fall for this skilful sleight of hand but ought, instead, to perceive that these satanic wonders, like Jezebel's false prophecy (2:20), are designed to lead astray (13:14;

¹⁵ I cannot, here, engage with exegetes who link the land monster to some institutional reality in Roman Asia.

¹⁶ For other anti-christ traditions, cf. Caird, *op.cit.*, in loc.; he gives the following extra-canonical parallels: *Asc. Es.* 4:5ss; *II Es.* 5:4; *Sib. Or.* 3:63ss. Prigent, *op.cit.*, p.210, adds the Apocalypse of Elijah.

¹⁷ There will, of course, be genuine fire (of divine judgment) again later, in 20:9.

cf. 12:9) and that here is a false Elijah preparing the way of a simulated christ.

Another detail, rarely noticed by commentators, helps us penetrate the monsters' smoke-screen: It is the brief initial entrance, in 11:7, of the first beast who successfully combats, defeats and kills the two witnesses leaving them unburied. Everyone recognises the obvious anticipation of the successes of ch.13, but the real question is, why this early appearance? 11:11,12 gives the answer, for after the monster has done its worst the witnesses are raised from death and ascend to heaven. What we have in ch.13 is therefore another, more indirect attempt to neutralise their testimony; the 'war' is the same, as can be seen from the verbal identity of what afflicts the witness of 11:7 and the saints of 13:7. The careful linking of the monsters' tandem with the two witnesses is surely the most surprising aspect of John's composition; their anti-witness acts as negative counterpart to the earlier positive word and their career is modelled on that of the two martyrs.

Moment of truth (ch.14:1-20). Deceitful appearances now give way to reality in 14:1;¹⁸ whatever the impact on his reader of 13:1-18, John is not about to give falsehood the last word. Right from the opening scenes of Revelation John has been equipping Asian Christians to spot genuine witness to Jesus when they see it, and to unmask false testimony however well disguised. Now in this passage he makes double sure that their eye is firmly redirected to what is real and their ear re-attuned to truth. The redeemed accompanying the Lamb have no lie in them (14:5) and this is a key characteristic, for lies and deception exclude from the book of life and from life with God (21:27; 22:15). The trait recalls Zephaniah's remnant (Zep.3:13) and especially Isaiah's servant (Isa.53:9); in their integrity and truth, the 'sealed' offer a stark contrast to the duplicity and lies of the monsters and their retainers.

¹⁸ M.E. Boring, *Revelation*, Louisville, 1989, p.168, shows how 14:1-20 contrasts the true salvation offered by the Lamb with the false salvation the monster brings.

Now the true Gospel destined for all nations (cf. Ac.17:29-31; Ro.2:16) may ring out and silence the false (Rev.14:6). The monster had threatened, brainwashed and made idolaters out of virtually all earth-dwellers (13:12,13,16), but now comes the massive retort of a universal proclamation honouring and glorifying the creator and judge of the whole world (14:7). The dragon's deputies had forced human beings into servile prostration before false gods, but the eternal Gospel enjoins fear of God and gives him the glory mistakenly offered to the monster.

The threefold angelic proclamation (14:7,8,9-11) more than drowns out the monster's false testimony¹⁹ (13:15,17); it may, in addition, offer a riposte to the three previous woes.²⁰ Although only the first message is positive (a call to repentance, 14:7), while the two others predict Babylon's fall (14:8) and a sorry fate for the monster's followers (14:9-11), grace and judgement remain the obverse and reverse of the one Gospel. The real contrast is between the redeemed and the condemned, the Word and falsehood, monsters and true witnesses or angels,²¹ as 14:12,13 confirms. Preceded by an exhortation to perseverance, obedience and fidelity,²² the last word is one of consolation spoken by a heavenly voice (14:13a), underlined and ratified by the Spirit addressing the Churches (14:13b; cf. 2:7 etc.).

A hymn to truth (ch.15:1-4). 15:3,4 hails both the successful testimony whose truth none can deny and the universal worship it produces. Significantly, when as in the parallel vision of 11:19 the Temple opens, it is the holy place of the Tent of Testimony that is

¹⁹ Compare Swete, op.,cit., p.184.

²⁰ This is Schüssler-Fiorenza's proposal, op.cit., p.89.

²¹ The three angels of 14:6ff are a foil to three others who had announced woes in chapters 8 and 9, and as Bauckham shows, op.cit., p.286, they are also functionally equivalent to the two witnesses.

²² I.T Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, New York, 1919, p.658, notes "special admonition and encourage-ment to the saints."

glimpsed (15:5). The unique johannine use of μαρτυρίον (and not μαρτυρία) here invites comment. It might, as in the Septuagint, connote legal evidence or proof that will testify to covenant (un)faithfulness or it could simply refer to the copy of the Decalogue placed in the Ark (Ex.16:34, etc.); in Revelation, all other uses of μαρτυρέω or μαρτυρία qualify testimony by or to Jesus. Accordingly, the hymn may be lauding both witness to the Gospel by which all are converted (15:4) and also the final plagues afflicting those who refuse it; this would accord fully with the declaration that God's judgements are true and just (16:7).

Staying on the alert (ch.16:13-17). Within our chosen theme the pendulum of contrast now swings right back again: The three angels give way to three unclean spirits²³ spewed from the mouths of the triumvirate of dragon, sea monster and land monster (16:13). This foul discharge recalls the dragon's sputtering (12:15), the blasphemy vomited by the sea monster (13:6), the land monster's coercion to worship its partner (13:12) or again, the deadly utterances of the image it animates (13:15). The three unclean spirits' actions (16:14,16) spellbind the earth so effectively that a cautionary interruption in the narrative is necessary (16:15), picking up both a warning already delivered at Sardis (3:3) and an order to watch uttered both there and in Laodicea (3:2,18).

A prophetic word to the wise recaptures the theme of urgency found on the lips of Jesus in the Gospels (Mk.13:15,16), with his warning about the unexpected thief (Lk.12:39) and his exhortation to vigilance (Mt.24:43), compressing them into direct speech: Ἴδου ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτης. In the story so far, Jesus has already interjected a blessing (in 14:13) whilst another word has also encouraged those facing grim trials and the temptation to apostasy (13:9,10). Soon betrayal personified as a whore (17:1ff) will take centre stage. But first, God has the last word on all that has gone before and the first word concerning what is still to come: Γέγονεν (16:17; cf. its

²³ Thus E.-B.Allo, *St. Jean, l'Apocalypse*, Paris, 1933, p.259.

reprise in 21:9). He is also the author of a powerful and decisive concluding act (16:18) where the 'special effects' round the throne at once parallel and exceed those of 4:5.

Staring treason in the face (ch.17:1 – 18:4). With the vignette of the prostitute mounted on the scarlet monster we sense an escalation in the conflict between truth and lies, life-giving Word and deadly propaganda. In 17:6 the saints/witnesses (the terms are in apposition)²⁴ pay with their own blood; the blood-drunk whore so bewitches even John that the very sight of her is his confusion (ἐθαυμάσα... θαῦμα μέγα). In such circumstances, a mind enlightened by wisdom is what is needed (17:9). In this vision, Babylon the hooker offers a shocking caricature of Jerusalem the bride; the combined sexual/urban metaphor conjures up a vision of what the Church would look like if she fell into apostasy by betraying the Gospel; the result is a nightmarish scenario meant to prevent the faithful from ever letting it happen.²⁵

A similar motivation surfaces in the command of 18:4 telling God's people to leave Babylon to her condemnation and ruin (18:4,5). John has reused prophetic oracles against Babylon (for example, Isa.46-48 and Jer.50-51), especially the texts where the people are told to flee the city (Jer.51:45; Isa.48:20). The latter verse presents the order as good news, for Babylon's fall means salvation and restoration for the people of God; this is why when justice is done, an imperative to utter praise is appropriate (18:20), as in the case of an earlier favourable verdict (12:12). Unrighteous deeds characterise Babylon (18:5) whereas God's judgements against her

²⁴ Against the view that μάρτυς here means martyr (unlike 16:6; 18:24; 19:2), we agree with A.A. Trites, 'Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse', *NovT* XVI, 1973, pp.72-80, that in Revelation the word essentially has a judicial reference and means a court witness (whose blood may or may not have been spilt).

²⁵ Or did John see this already in the Church? D. Ford (op.cit., p.667) thinks so, following P. Minear, *I Saw A New Earth*, Washington, 1968, p.211.

are righteous and true (19:2): The witnesses' testimony convinces the court and their blood is avenged by a not-guilty verdict.

A victory for truth (ch.19:11-21). Why does this new scene use a military metaphor while maintaining a courtroom atmosphere? For the simple reason that we are still dealing with a war of words, as in 12:7-12 where the defence counsel Michael defeated the satanic prosecutor.²⁶ Beneficiaries of the penetrating, vivifying Word confront rebellious unbelievers that this same trenchant Word will 'kill', for the sharp sword of the Gospel preached (19:21) acquits some and sentences others to death (cf. Jn.16:8ff). The incarceration of the sea monster and false prophet puts an end to their so-called miracles and coercive power – they had sought in vain to counterfeit Christ's testimony and Spirit-inspired witness. All this is carefully set up in 19:9,10 where there is a transition to this scene from the preceding hymn (19:1-8) and a focus on four related matters which are at stake here :-

- i) the transmission of revelation, governed by the solemn command $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\psi\omicron\nu$ (cf. 1:11,19; 14:13; and 21:5);
- ii) the written transcript of the true words Christ has spoken, faithfully reproduced – as the triple repetition of $\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota$ implies (cf. the voice that addressed the seer in 1:12);
- iii) the testimony of Jesus which every Christian possesses ($\epsilon\chi\omicron\nu\tau\omega\nu$ τήν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, cf. 6:9);
- iv) the establishment of an equivalence between witness and prophet (thus the brother-witnesses here will be called brother-prophets in 22:9).

²⁶ Joel's portrayal of a "valley of decision" had already mixed legal and military metaphors (Jl.3:1-16).

These points highlight the rider's title, *faithful and true*, marking him out as the authentic witness, truly to be trusted, who spoke to the Church at Laodicea (3:14). Insistence on his trustworthiness brings to a climax the sequence set in motion by the cameos of 14:1-5 and 14:6-20, in which believers have stuck by the truth in their battle with falsehood. Faithful witness to the Gospel had been celebrated in 15:3,4, but thereafter three evil spirits and a blood-drunk whore had revived the enemy cause for a time, till its final defeat in the verdict of 19:2.

The rider is a foil to every fraud so far thrown up by the plot - Balaam, the Nicolaitans, Jezebel or the monstrous false witness and false prophet. He is the real Messiah whose word is true, the one deemed faithful from the very start (1:5) who had reproved then consoled the Laodiceans (3:14ff) and whom the Philadelphians already knew to be authentic (3:7). No wonder a sharp sword issues from his mouth (19:15; cf. 1:16; 2:12), symbolising the true testimony to be expected from none other than the Word of God (19:13). No surprise, either, to see those who were deaf to his word judged as they sup at a sort of universal anti-banquet (19:7,8). By the same logic the duo of monsters, whose lies had duped humanity (19:19,20), die a living death as will the ultimate adversary, dragon by whatever name, temporarily arrested in 20:2,3 and definitively put away in 20:10.

Beware of falsehood even now! (ch.20:1 – 22:21). At this point Revelation's readers might be saying, "We knew it! The saints slaughtered for their testimony had to get the verdict in the end." Rising to life and reigning with Christ are thus a fitting result for those who had chosen to resist monstrous lies and bear responsibility for their testimony even to death. But John holds his readers in a rhetorical tension right to the end of his book. Even as true and reliable words, making all things new, bring the victor's heritage to fruition (21:7) – spoken, in all likelihood, by God himself – there comes an accompanying solemn warning (21:8), repeated again after the expansion of 21:9-27. It seems that for John, true believers need encouragement, till their last breath, to go on renewing their commitment; for this reason, the certainty that their salvation is approaching is no justification for their falling asleep!

It is also consistent with John's parody approach that the fulfilment of the promises to the victors should be paralleled, antithetically, by an anti-message reiterating the contrast between Gospel and propaganda, true witness and misleading counter-proclamation. This explains the positioning of the two vice lists (cf. 1 Cor.6:9-11), one detailed (21:8) and the other more succinct (21:27), and the fact that both converge on falsehood as the worst form of evil-doing and the sum of all the rest.²⁷ Jn.8:44 readily springs to mind, where the devil is called father of lies. Again in 22:15 falsehood comes at the end of the exclusion order, insuring that the ongoing opposition we have seen is sustained to the very close of Revelation. From start (2:2; 3:9) to finish, the person of faith is warned against being counted among the monster's followers who believe and who live a diabolical lie.

A final reference to words that are certain and true (22:6, picking up on 1:1) appears to encompass all the foregoing visions and auditions: ἤκουσα is used only here without a complement, for there is no more to be heard; and καὶ ἑβλεψα occurs for the seventeenth and last time, since there is no more for John to see, 22:8. The theme of prophetic testimony to the revelation given by God through his Christ finishes where it began, with final explanations provided by angelic mediation (22:6).²⁸ Just as the link-persons in the opening revelatory chain collaborated in transmitting and unveiling a message to the Churches (2:1 – 3:22), so here there is an ultimate liturgical dialogue where Jesus's ἔρχομαι ταχὺ (22:7) expressly echoes 2:16 and 3:11 and recalls the ἐν τάχει of 1:1.

The revelatory event's solemnity is highlighted in two ways – by an ultimate temptation to fall down before the revealing angel, then by

²⁷ See, for example, Giblin, *op.cit.*, p.196, or Kraft, *op.cit.*, p.266.

²⁸ In this concluding dialogue, it is hard to know exactly who says what; some think Christ is already speaking in 22:6 as well as in 22:7. Also difficult is 22:18-20, where John, Jesus or John-quoting-Jesus are the options!

a corrective (22:9) which shows who fits where in the revelatory chain. Why such seriousness? Because now that revelation has taken place, it is the recipients' turn to testify; therefore their keeping all the words of *this book* will entail faithfully bearing witness to Jesus (19:10). The apocalyptic story, reinforced by a penultimate beatitude mirroring the first (22:7), has shown following Jesus the faithful witness to be a calling of dignity and worth. Readers can refresh this knowledge whenever necessary, for the book will remain open, accessible and useful to them (22:10). Nevertheless, the ups and downs of the intrigue, ending in a final exhortation (22:11) and warning (22:12; cf. 16:15), have stressed the need to be always on the *qui vive*.

Nor is John yet finished with the literary tension between comfort and caution, for still to come are a final macarism, focussing on Christ's redemption (cf. 7:14) and on the restoration it brings humanity, plus a definitive declaration of non-admittance (22:14,15). Only then will Christ the true witness have the last word, because his was from the start the communication to the Churches (22:16) and because he is the guarantor standing over the truth of the testimony (22:18,20).

* * *

Among other things this reading has demonstrated the close association, in the Apocalypse, between Christ as faithful witness and his followers who continue his testimony. This theme echoes the Gospels, where the disciples' difficulty in speaking for and of Jesus is already apparent. But Revelation dramatises truth issues in a scenario where the chief witness and his fellow-witnesses are impersonated, the Gospel is countered by an elaborate counterfeit, pseudo-miracles falsify apostolic credentials and Christ's heralds are shadowed by servile promoters of a false Messiah. A closely related theme in Revelation is that of *discipleship and counter-allegiance* which traverses the book in a similar way, opposing a redeemed people who belong to God and to the Lamb and a rival

horde whose activities, allegiance and destiny caricature theirs in every respect. But that is another story!²⁹

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²⁹ I explore this associated theme in an article in the journal *Théologie Évangélique* (forthcoming).

Domitian (Part ii)

Hamilton Moore and Philip McCormick

Imperial Cult

Most scholars whatever their methods of interpretation acknowledge that the second beast of Rev13v11-18 represents the Imperial Cult¹, or that it is strongly alluded to². In determining the historical setting of Revelation it is important to consider the type of persecution implied by John. Guthrie is correct when he states that 'even a casual reading of the Apocalypse is sufficient to impress the reader that the background is one of conflict between the ruling powers and the Christian Church'³. Guthrie then continues to observe that when the beast is mentioned there is the demand for universal worship (cf. 13v4, 15f; 14v9-11; 15v2; 16v2; 19v20; 20v4) and the insistence that all should wear his mark⁴. The question of whether the Beast of 13v1-18 was the imperial cult, as

¹ As an example see, M Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1940) p252; GB Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Massachusetts, Hendriksen, 1966) p171; M Ashcraft, 'Revelation', in *The Boardman Bible Commentary Vol. 12*, ed. J Allen (Nashville, Boardman) p315; W Barclay, *The Revelation of John 2 Vol.* (Edinburgh, Saint Andrew Press, 1976) 1.95; RH Charles, *The Revelation of St John 2 Vol.* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1920) 2.357-365.

² For example see, D Guthrie, 'Revelation', in *New Testament Introduction* (Leicester, IVP, 1970) p949; L Morris, *Revelation* (Leicester, IVP, 1987) p166; RH Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998) p254; GE Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans) p183. This is not to suggest that these scholars are as definite in their identification of this beast with the imperial cult. What they recognise is the historical background and the image this would have created in the minds of John's readers.

³ Guthrie, op.cit., (1970) p949.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p949.

the preterist maintains, or whether it was only a suitable symbol of something greater yet to be manifested, as the futurist maintains, is one that can be set aside for the moment. What is clear from the internal evidence within Revelation is that the conflict being experienced by the Church was religiously motivated. An important issue that confronts the student of Revelation is to determine which period of the early Church provides a suitable background to the persecution referred to in Revelation. Therefore, the whole issue of Emperor worship becomes central in this investigation, because of its links with the second beast of ch13v11-18.

The origins of the ruler cult can be traced to the Greek world. In his study of the Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor⁵, SRF Price devotes an entire chapter to Hellenistic cities and their rulers. The ruler cults found in these cities according to Price have been traditionally seen as the forerunner to the Roman ruler cult⁶. In the Hellenistic cults, cities honoured their rulers by bestowing upon them all manner of praise. These cults were modelled on divine rather than the ruler cult⁷. Although divine language was used of the ruler of a particular city, the function of the cult was primarily social and political. There was a recognition that the king was their donor and their saviour from danger⁸. Often when the political power of a ruler was ended, the cult of that ruler was also ended, sometimes violently⁹.

As the power and influence of Rome spread, particularly after the peace of Apamea in 188BC, cults to the power of Rome began to

⁵ SRF Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁶ Price, op.cit., p24.

⁷ Ibid., p32.

⁸ Ibid., p51.

⁹ Ibid., p40.

appear¹⁰. As Rome's power increased so to did the number of cults to the goddess Roma, until they became quite common. In contrast, as the number of cults to Roma spread, the number of Hellenistic royal cults decreased. This evolution of the cult to Roma, in its various forms, should be understood as an attempt by the Greeks to respond to the changing political situation in the district. As with the Hellenistic royal ruler cults, the divine language used of the cult of Roma was recognition by the people of the power and influence exerted over them by Rome.

As the nature of Roman government changed, from Republic to Principate a corresponding change took place in cultic practice, seen in the movement from Roma to Roman imperial ruler cult¹¹. Although the Senate still played a part in the system of Roman government, the Princeps - or Emperor - became the focus of Roman power. Quite naturally Greek city states sought political advantage by seeking to establish cults to the genius of the Emperor - a practice observed by Price, 'initiative from Rome was not required, only modification and adjustment'¹².

It can be maintained that, the 'ruler cult shows a decisive change with Augustus'¹³. In 9BC the assembly of the province of Asia awarded a crown 'for the person who devised the greatest honours for the god' - namely Augustus. Price records their reasons:

Whereas the providence which divinely ordered our lives created with zeal and munificence most perfect good for our lives by producing Augustus and filling him with virtue for the benefaction of mankind, sending us and those after us

¹⁰ Although as Price notes, the earliest known cult to Roma in this area dates from 195BC (*Ibid.*, p41).

¹¹ This does not mean that the cults to Roma were abandoned. While they decreased, cults to Roma continued to exist.

¹² Price, *op.cit.*, p53.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p54.

with a saviour who put an end to war and established all things; and whereas Caesar [sc. Augustus] when he appeared exceeded the hopes of all who had anticipated good tidings, not only by surpassing the benefactors born before him, but not even leaving those to come any hope of surpassing him; and whereas the birthday of a god marked for the world the beginning of good tidings through his coming¹⁴.

Rather than being a unique piece of flattery, the sentiments of gratitude in this document echo a general expression of appreciation towards Augustus and his reign. This in turn is hardly surprising given that Augustus established the *Pax Romana* or Roman Peace; a peace that was to grace the Mediterranean area for almost two centuries, virtually without interruption. Augustus' reorganisation and rehabilitation of the empire had a profound effect upon everyone, from the humblest to the noblest. Not unnaturally he was deeply revered by his people and respected by a wider populace in the empire. The desire for political advantage and a genuine respect for Augustus provided the soil in which a cult to genius could grow in the provinces.

It is unlikely that Augustus ever thought of himself as a god. However, even though he did not encourage this practice he did permit it and allowed temples to be built for his worship in the provinces. The contrast between the actions of the Greeks and the Romans on the divine status of Augustus must be carefully noted. It was one thing that Augustus should be venerated as a god by the Greeks, the Romans however, at least officially, did not confer deification until the death of the Emperor. With an Emperor like Augustus, the Senate - encouraged by Tiberius - moved quickly to confer the honour of deification shortly after his death. This was not the case with every emperor, as Price remarks, 'in consequence

¹⁴ Cited in Price, op.cit., p54.

there was considerable mismatch between the official Roman list of *divi* and the recipients of cults in the Greek East'¹⁵.

A similar attitude to the worship of his genius was shared by Augustus stepson Tiberius. Evidence of his attitude towards his worship can be seen in one of his speeches recorded - and probably reworked¹⁶ - by Tacitus:

‘I, senators [says Tiberius (ibid.38.1)] testify before you and wish those who come after to remember, that I am a mortal and that I perform the functions of a mortal and that it is enough that I fulfil the duties of a Prince. Posterity will render homage enough [*satis superque*] to my memory if it believes me to have been worthy of my forebear's, careful of your interests, resolute in danger, not fearful of giving rise to rancour against myself when it is for the public good. These sentiments in your hearts will be my temples, the most beautiful and longest images of me. Indeed, monuments of marble become despised as sepulchres when the judgement of posterity turns to hatred. I therefore beseech the provincials, the citizens and the gods themselves, the last to grant me, to the end of my life : peace of mind and the ability to distinguish between the rights due to man and those due to the deity [*quietam et intelligentem humani divinique iuris mentem dunt*], the first when I die, they honour my name and my actions with the glory of a good remembrance’¹⁷.

Whether it was as a result of his personal wish, or that the Senate could not remember him with ‘a good remembrance’, or that he

¹⁵ Ibid., p75.

¹⁶ M Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (London, Croom Hill, 1983) p174.

¹⁷ Cited in Sordi, op.cit., p174.

could not be set beside the great Augustus, Tiberius was never defied by the Senate.

Gaius (Caligula) had a completely different approach to the whole notion of the imperial cult than either Augustus or Tiberius. Suetonius, who referred to him as Caligula the monster (*Gaius* 22.1), records how Gaius established a shrine to himself as god and had a life-sized golden image of himself dressed in his own everyday clothes. He also records that 'he was once overheard threatening the god [capitoline Jupiter]: "If you do not raise me up to Heaven I will cast you down to Hell"' (*Gaius* 22). This self-belief in his deity not only contributed to his eventual downfall, it also caused serious problems for the Jewish community in Alexandria and later Judea.

In AD38 large-scale violent fighting broke out in Alexandria between the Greeks, who were the majority population, and the Jews. At this time the Jewish community was a minority group whose right to full citizenship was constantly rejected. In the ensuing frenzy the Greeks devastated the Jewish quarter and persuaded the Prefect, Flaccus, to order that statues of the Emperor should be placed in the synagogues. Naturally the Jews objected. Their strict adherence to the prohibition of idolatry in the Mosaic Law and their concept of monotheism left them with no other option. In AD40 both sides sent representatives to Rome to plead their case before Gaius. Philo, who represented the Jewish community of Alexandria before the Emperor, found himself confronted by a man who accused the Jews of being god-haters because of their refusal to acknowledge his divinity¹⁸. The opposing representative then accused the Jews of not offering sacrifices of thanksgiving to Gaius. Realising the seriousness of the situation the Jews sought to explain that although their religion prohibited them from offering sacrifices to the Emperor, they were glad to offer

¹⁸ Price, op.cit., p209. For a fuller account see, JPVD Balsdon, *The Emperor Gaius (Caligula)* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1934) p157-173; AA Barrett, *Caligula - The Corruption of Power* (London, BT Batsford, 1989) ch9 p140-153.

sacrifices for him. The response of the Emperor was typical of his inconsistencies. On the one hand he recalled Flaccus and had him put to death. However, on the other hand, when he heard of the unrest in Judea, again between the Jews and the Greeks, he ordered that a statue of himself in the guise of Zeus be placed in the Temple in Jerusalem. The prospect of a national rebellion by the whole of the Jewish people coupled with mass martyrdom became very real possibilities. The crisis was avoided, either because of his assassination and thereby his orders were ignored¹⁹; or he was persuaded by his friend Julius Agrippa not to go through with this course of action²⁰.

What is highly significant in this incident is Gaius's attitude to his personal deity and the effect this could have outside Rome. It must be conceded that the trouble between the Jews and the Greeks in Alexandria was deep seated and complex, having a long history. Despite this, the use of the Greeks of the Jewish failure to sacrifice to the divinity of the Roman Emperor as justification of violence is extremely relevant to the situation found in the book of the Revelation. The riots in Alexandria may have had complex social and ethnic dimensions to them²¹, but they were justified to the Roman authorities on religious grounds. Although Gaius did not personally sponsor the trouble in Alexandria, his personal belief in his own divinity created the opportunity for violence to be justified by one group upon another. This personal self-belief of Gaius enabled the Greeks to justify themselves to the Emperor for their persecution of the Jewish minority.

When Claudius was hailed as Emperor by the Praetorian Guard, a move quickly ratified by the Senate, the whole notion of the

¹⁹ Massie, *op.cit.*, p136. A version of events which Barrett, *op.cit.*, suggests was circulated to suit Jewish tradition and Petronius' later reputation (p90).

²⁰ Grant, *op.cit.*, p28. A version of events favoured by both Balsdon and Barrett.

²¹ For a detailed account of the historical and ethnic background to the trouble in Alexandria see Barrett *op.cit.*, ch12 p82-191.

imperial cult in the East had undergone change. Price notes that 'by the time of Claudius (the imperial cult) was an outward sign of loyalty which involved little sentiment'²². The rich and expressive descriptions used of Augustus had given way to a more modest use of language. The political nature of the imperial cult in the East was now manifesting itself as being the main factor in its continuation. Such a change would not have bothered Claudius. As B Levick comments, 'his moderation in respect of the imperial cult, classified as another aspect of his "religious" policy, was essentially political, part of a prudent conception of the Princeps' role in the Empire and a reaction to the autocracy of Gaius'²³. An extremely intelligent and able man, Claudius like Augustus and Tiberius before him did not take his cultus seriously. His deification by the Senate is a good illustration that in the Roman mind this was an honour to be bestowed rather than recognition of divinity.

According to MT Griffith 'there is little evidence for the notion that Nero introduced important innovations in the ruler cult'²⁴. Like Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius, Nero appears to have begun, and continued throughout his reign, to have refused to claim divine worship. Evidence from the early stages of his reign can be seen in his rejection of one such approach by Egypt. Even 'as late as 65 Nero refused a temple to Divus Nero in Rome, respecting the Augustan convention whereby the living Emperor was not worshipped officially in Rome or Italy'²⁵. Numismatic evidence does exist however, which portrays Nero as the New Sun (*Neos Helios*). This identification was not unique as it had already appeared on Roman Republican coins²⁶. Griffith attributes this

²² Price, *op.cit.*, p57.

²³ B Levick, *Claudius* (London, BT Batsford, 1990) p88.

²⁴ MT Griffith, *Nero - The End of a Dynasty* (London, BT Batsford, 1984) p215.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p216.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p127.

imagery to the credit given to Sol - the Sun god - for the detection of the Pisonian conspiracy²⁷.

Nero loved all things Greek and it is the Hellenistic version of monarchy that probably provides the best basis for understanding the imperial cult under Nero. After an initial period of playing the part of the Princeps - first among equals - Nero found Oriental despotism a more suitable paradigm for his reign. As Griffith observes, 'the attractions of the Greek world thus became overwhelming for a Princeps who needs applause'²⁸. Unlike Gaius, however, Nero did not demand *proskunesis* or claim to be a god. Rather, having absolute power, Nero not only lived as an immensely wealthy playboy but loved, if not craved for, flattery and praise²⁹. Although not claiming to be a god - unlike Gaius - Nero deliberately lived in a style that raised him far above ordinary men. His was a life that not only removed him from the world of ordinary people but eventually also from reality. Massie cites the building of Nero's Golden House as evidence of 'Nero's withdrawal into a dream world, his preference for fancy and make believe to facts'³⁰. Nero therefore, did not consider himself divine but he did deliberately elevate himself above his subjects, and lived in his own fantasy world.

The period of civil war, commonly referred to as the year of the four emperors, was one of instability and uncertainty concerning the

²⁷ Ibid., p128. This was a conspiracy to make Gaius Calpurnius Piso emperor in AD65. It was foiled by the slaves of the conspirators informing Nero of their masters plans.

²⁸ Ibid., p215.

²⁹ For details and examples see the standard sources and almost any work on Nero. His love of praise and outrageous lifestyle are so well documented, that any further comment is unnecessary.

³⁰ Massie, op.cit., p174.

future of the empire³¹. It is therefore possible to ignore this period when considering the imperial cult. The brevity of each of the three reigns makes any investigation unnecessary. With the political uncertainty in Rome, it is improbable that any attempt was made to promote a ruler cult of any of the three Emperors - Galba, Otho and Vitellius.

Once, however, order was restored and a period of political stability ensued, it is not surprising that the imperial cult in the East, and later in the West, reappears. Vespasian, unlike any of his predecessors was not in a position to claim divine honours for himself, however unlikely it may have been. Nero was the last of the Julio-Claudian emperors. Although his actions distanced him from the people, Nero could claim descent from gods and kings. In complete contrast, Vespasian was from humbler and less nobler origins. His ascent to the position of princeps was due to his military strength and abilities and not his noble lineage. Ironically, Nero gave Vespasian command because of his family obscurity, believing that he was not a threat to him³². It is therefore not surprising to discover that Vespasian adopted a pragmatic approach to the imperial cult and government.

This is not to suggest that Vespasian did not have a religious policy or did not employ religious language to suit his own political objectives. Scott carefully notes Vespasian's use of religious stories, dreams, prophecies and signs to authenticate his claim to the throne³³. Vespasian was more than a good soldier who had the power base of several Roman legions behind him. He was also aware of the value and lasting effect of religious propaganda. For all his many faults, Nero had a long royal family lineage. By contrast,

³¹ See Tacitus who said of 69 that it was 'almost the last' (*Hist.*1.2,11) thinking that the Empire had come to its end, such was the unrest in this year.

³² See Scott, *op.cit.*, p2.

³³ *Ibid.*, ch1.

who was Vespasian? Was he just the most powerful general who had prudently manoeuvred himself into an unassailable position? Or was he a man of destiny, whose rise to power was accompanied by divinely inspired phenomena? Whether it was a series of fortunate occurrences³⁴ or carefully engineered happenings, his rise to the throne appeared to have a divine seal upon it³⁵. However, as Scott notes, 'when Vespasian obtained firm control of the empire, the necessity for further miracles to serve the purposes of propaganda ceased, and it is significant that only three other omens concerning Vespasian are recorded'³⁶.

Having established his position, Vespasian made no secret of his dynastic plans. In this regard Scott notes his active policy - rivalling Augustus - of restoring and building temples to the gods³⁷. Vespasian was aware that such a policy would endear him to the people. Although a soldier, Vespasian was also religious and conscious of the importance of religion in any community or state. So when the Senate flattered him by issuing coins with his image and a radiate crown, a symbol of divinity, Vespasian did not hinder them³⁸. Vespasian was not Nero and did not crave flattery. However, he was pragmatic enough to use this to further his political and dynastic plans. Therefore while it is likely that the imperial cult in the East was re-established in the reign of Vespasian, his response to it marked a return to the traditional Roman attitude that '*apotheosis*' takes place after death. It was bestowed as a mark of respect and was not recognition of divinity.

³⁴ Like the Nile rising above its normal level upon his entry into Alexandria.

³⁵ Scott, *op.cit.*, p9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p17.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p32.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p33.

‘As Vespasian had foreseen, he was duly deified by Titus, because, according to the Younger Pliny, Tacitus desired to seem the son of a god’³⁹ This is understandable given the relatively humble background of his family. The deification of Vespasian served as a mark of respect to his father from the nation⁴⁰ and used by Titus as a means of furthering his own political ends. Some coins struck during his reign shows his deified father handing on the *regimen orbis* - signifying the transition of power and the fulfilment of Vespasian’s desire for a Flavian dynasty. It was a useful means of consolidating his position in the eyes of the empire.

Like his father, Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius, Titus refused to look upon himself as divine⁴¹. However, as with Augustus, this did not hinder others from addressing him in flattering language. If we accept the evidence of Tacitus and Suetonius, the reign of Titus, though brief was worthy of 'apotheosis' and the accompanying terms of address.⁴²

Two further questions arise from this investigation that can be addressed now. The first is a consideration of whether the imperial cult was merely a formality, separated from any true religious significance. In this case, was the deification of an emperor - or other worthy - simply the bestowal of an honour? Central to this and its significance for Revelation are the terms *divi* and *deus* used when speaking of a divine Caesar. The second question and one of

³⁹ Ibid., p40.

⁴⁰ As with Augustus, the people were grateful to Vespasian for restoring peace and order during his reign, particularly after the period of civil war.

⁴¹ Scott, op.cit., p54.

⁴² Consideration of the imperial cult at this point surveying the reigns of Nerva or Trajan. After the spectacle of Domination’s delusion, Nerva would not have considered presenting himself as divine. Such a notion would have been unthinkable. Although Pliny attempted to force Christians to offer worship to the Emperor, this was more a test of loyalty than any deep-seated belief on Trajan’s part of his own personal deity.

great importance to understanding the social and historical setting of Revelation is the extent to which this issue could have been significant in the persecution experienced by the Church. While perhaps not sufficient in itself, any answer to this question will enable a better understanding of when John was writing and against what social background the work must be set.

1. The Imperial Cult, a Religious Formality? In his treatment of the question of the public formality of the imperial cult, Price has observed two related though distinct dangers that must be taken into account when considering this issue. The first is the 'danger of analysing religious activities with categories drawn from Christianity'⁴³. The second is our modern distinction between the public and private sphere of the individual. Price is correct to warn of these dangers, precisely because of their subtlety.

It is natural to consider the nature of the imperial cult from the standpoint of westernised Christianity. The terms of reference, the language and the practice we engage in become the paradigms by which we evaluate other religious systems. An example of this can be seen by considering the way JI Packer introduces his book *Knowing God*⁴⁴. While many Christians will be challenged by this presentation of religious experience, it does not necessarily follow that this must be superimposed upon ancient religious or religious experience. Therefore, what might appear as formality to us in the modern west, may have been a genuine religious experience or expression to an ancient Greek or Roman. Coupled with this, is the distinction we draw between the public and private aspects of the individual's life. If as it seems likely, the imperial cult was mostly a public ceremony, this does not necessarily imply that it was a formal ritual to be observed. To make this assumption, as Price rightly observes, imposes our distinctions on the ancient world.

⁴³ Price, *op.cit.*, p117. See also Barrett, *op.cit.*, p140.

⁴⁴ JI Packer, *Knowing God* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1973).

The imperial cult has been regarded by scholars as something in which only the upper class of society participated in⁴⁵, because of the value in showing loyalty to the ruler in this way⁴⁶. This said, Price also notes a common assumption that, the same elite class adopted or displayed a scepticism towards the notion that the emperor was divine. Indeed, he goes further to note that it became a common subject matter for jokes and satire⁴⁷. In contrast the lower class of Roman and Greek society, the elite participated mainly in the formal public ceremonies where a whole community would participate. While Price seeks to argue 'that the imperial cult was not just a game to be played in public'⁴⁸ the consensus in scholarship - as he concedes - is that only a few took the cult into their homes. The imperial cult was unlike other religious activity, such as the worship of Zeus. Rather it was a public ritual performed by a community at appointed times for non-religious ends. It provided a sociological function within the community.

2. *Divus or Deus?* This can be observed in the use of the two words *divus* and *deus*. Jones states concerning this that 'the best that an emperor could expect after death was to be declared a *divus*, never a *deus*: a living one had to make do with even less'⁴⁹. In the Greek world, on the other hand, a reigning Emperor would be called θεός. However, as Price points out 'there was no readily available translation of *divus* into Greek and the basis to employ the term *theos*'⁵⁰. He does maintain, that in 'Greece, as also Rome, where no clear relationship was established between the categories of *deus*

⁴⁵ Price, op.cit., p120, who cites Pliny the Younger as an example.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p107.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p115.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p120.

⁴⁹ Jones, op.cit., (1993) p108.

⁵⁰ Price, op.cit., p75.

and *divus*, the institution of the imperial cult produced a system whose relationship to both gods and men was ambiguous'⁵¹.

This observation by Price that there was no clear distinction between *divus* and *deus* must be seriously questioned. If there was no significant difference between the two words, why was Domitian's desire to be called or addressed as *dominus et deus noster* such a shock to Suetonius, who was undoubtedly reflecting a common Roman reaction? Such a reaction of shock can only be understood if there was an important and significant difference between the two terms. The word *divus* did not convey deity to the Roman mind. Rather, it conveyed that the individual displayed divine qualities⁵², normally associated with a god⁵³. This distinction between actually being divine and having godlike characteristics was appropriate to the Romans. What was inappropriate and highly distasteful was that a living mortal would claim deity for himself, and expected to be regarded as such - e.g. Gaius and Domitian. Domitian's desire to be addressed or referred to as *deus*, was regarded as completely improper; as is reflected by Suetonius' comments (*Dom* 13).

Regarding the second question, to what extent can the practice of the imperial cult was significant in the persecution experienced by the Church, Price is very specific. In his section 'Conflict and Dissent' he addresses what he calls, 'the old picture of a clash between Christ and the Caesars'⁵⁴. While he notes that Christian non-participation in many areas of community life was troubling to the population of Asia⁵⁵, he is virtually dismissive of this issue as a serious ingredient in any conflict between Church and State.

⁵¹ Ibid., p120.

⁵² See Barrett, op.cit.,p140.

⁵³ These might be something like strength or wisdom etc.

⁵⁴ Price, op.cit., p123.

⁵⁵ He notes the petition to Haddrian accusing Christians of illegal acts.

After commenting on a little known martyr act of the fourth century he states that, 'there is no parallel, so far as I know for such an expression of conflict between the imperial cult and Christianity in any pre-Constantinian document'⁵⁶. Price returns to this subject again in chapter 8 'Sacrifices', where he seeks to demonstrate that those who persecuted Christians - i.e. Pliny - were careful to distinguish between sacrifice to the gods and to the emperor⁵⁷. His argument is that while someone like Pliny could distinguish between sacrifices to the gods and sacrifices to the emperor 'it took the Christians whose understanding had been sharpened by their transvaluation of sacrifice to insist on some degree of logical systematisation'⁵⁸. In other words, it was their theological understanding of sacrifice that caused their problems, not any religious persecution of them for their belief in Christ. If they could only have adopted a more pragmatic attitude towards sacrifice - like Pliny - they might not have faced these particular problems. However, with regard to the Jews he maintains that, 'the Jewish system of sacrifice easily accommodated the emperor, so long as he was not Gaius, until that is the start of the great revolt from Rome in AD66 was symbolised by the cessation of such sacrifices'⁵⁹. These comments reveal that Price has not given enough credence to the basic nature of the problem reflected in the book of the Revelation.

Both the Jews and the Christians were willing to honour and respect the emperor. The Jewish practice was it seems, acceptable to the Romans, except that is when it was known to Gaius personally. Because he thought of himself as a god, he regarded the Jews as god-haters. Their refusal to sacrifice to him as a god, led to his order to have a statue of his image placed in their synagogues. The difficulty between the Jews and Gaius was not simply based on the

⁵⁶ Price, *op.cit.*, p126.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p221.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p222.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p220.

Jews dislike of Gaius, but on their inability to treat Gaius as a god. Their religious beliefs made this impossible. Christians faced a similar dilemma. Their basic problem with the imperial cult lay in the exclusivist claims at the heart of their religious belief. It did not matter if a governor such as Pliny made a distinction between the gods and the emperor. In the minds of the Christians, any recognition that the emperor had divine qualities, somewhat less than deity, would have been unacceptable. Also, the religious connotations in the word sacrifice would have been problematic for Christians.

Fortunately, the issue does not appear to have arisen often in the first few centuries; the reason for this is due to at least these two factors. Firstly, from the reign of Claudius the imperial cult underwent a change becoming more and more a sign of political loyalty, until it virtually disappeared in the third century. Therefore we would expect to see less of a problem as the generations passed, rather than the reverse. Secondly, and closely related to this, is the attitude and response of the individual emperor. With Emperors such as Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Vespasian, Titus, Nerva and Trajan, the potential for a clash was reduced, because of their personal attitude to their cults. This is still valid despite Pliny's executions of Christians during the reign of Trajan. Trajan expressly forbids the deliberate seeking out of Christians. This action would have discouraged any large scale hunting down of Christians for political advantage. The question of what would happen under the reign of an emperor who regarded himself as a *deus* is one that Price does not either ask or address. Given the character of Domitian and his desire for divine titles, it is worth considering if a similar situation arose during his reign regarding Christians as arose under Gaius with the Jews.

It would be incorrect to say that the persecution of the Jews in Alexandria in AD38 was simply caused by social tensions rather than deeply held theological beliefs. In the ancient world, especially in the Greek and Roman world, religion and politics were inseparable. It is a modern development to separate the two. The background to the trouble in Alexandria between the Jews and the Greeks may be viewed as political and social. However, that wholesale murder and terror were justified by appealing to the

religious beliefs of the city, e.g. the failure of the Jews to recognise Gaius' divinity, must be carefully considered and not minimised. This connection between the political life of a city and its religious practices can be traced back to the Greek city states where politics and religion were two sides of the one coin. If it was in the interests of a city, or indeed region, to recognise the deity of the emperor, it is a logical assumption that anything or any group that would undermine that interest would place itself in grave danger of a backlash or mob violence. When considering this it is important that these two points be carefully noted. Firstly, The importance of the religious life of a city to that city's economy must be considered. If one takes a city like Ephesus, with its numerous temples and shrines it is not unreasonable to assume that those temples were inextricably linked with the city's economy; i.e. with its priestly orders, sacrifices and traders in religious artefacts etc. In the Acts of the Apostles (19v23-41), Paul is accused of causing a loss in trade in Ephesus because of the content of his message. This, coupled with the perceived threat to the honour of Artemis resulted in mass city-wide civil unrest. This incident in Acts enables us to add economics to politics and religion, because they are inter-linked. This suggestion that there is a link between economics and religion and that this is a possible cause, or contributing factor, for persecution against Christians is strengthened by the imagery of Rev 13v15-17.

'He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the beast to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no-one could buy or sell unless he had the mark which is the name of the beast or the number of his name'⁶⁰.

A second and closely connected point that must be given greater weight than has often been the case, is the vast number of temples and shrines to the imperial cult in Asia Minor. Price in his list of

⁶⁰ See the commentaries for the many and varied suggestions as to the precise meaning of this passage. In particular see EA Judge, 'The Mark of the Beast, Revelation 13:16', in *TynBul* 42.1 (1991), p159-161.

temples and shrines has provided a careful study of the extent of its practice and thereby its importance to everyday life⁶¹. Right across Asia there were temples and shrines to individual emperors or imperial temples to the living divine emperors⁶². Although emperor worship is nearly always referred to in the major commentaries on Revelation, its widespread existence and thereby its influence has not been emphasised enough considering its obvious relevance to the Book.

If one takes these two points and combines them with what I have already established about the character of Domitian and his personal attitude to his divinity, it is not a quantum leap to place the problems being experienced by the early church in Revelation within the reign of Domitian. If Paul faced mob violence because of the message he preached, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Christians in Asia faced similar violence, justified, as with the Jews in AD39, by their refusal to acknowledge, worship or take part in the imperial cult. Flaccus refused to stop the violence against the Jews in Alexandria in AD39, and showed his complicity by ordering images of Gaius placed in Jewish synagogues. No doubt he hoped that this would please his deluded emperor. Would Roman officials therefore, have protected an esoteric and misunderstood group who outwardly appeared to oppose the public worship of Domitian, and who were also possibly undermining the economy of a town or city through their message (cf Acts 19:23-41)? It is easier to suggest a scenario in which officials wanting to please another deluded emperor would adopt an attitude similar to Flaccus. In a very real sense, Christians in Asia during the later years of Domitian's reign would most certainly have been in a very vulnerable and isolated position. They would have been open to the whims of mob violence against them, without perhaps the protection of the Roman authorities.

Christian Persecution under Nero

⁶¹ Price, *op.cit.*, p249-274.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p259.

In his article on 'The Problem of the Domitianic Date of Revelation',⁶³ Wilson laments what he terms as the clearly observable shift in scholarship from a pre AD 70 date to a Domitianic date. After working through a number of arguments in which he takes issue with many major commentaries, he draws the following conclusions. 'First, Revelation was written in a historical background of recent persecution. The persecution of 95 and 96 was the creation of Eusebius and Lightfoot, not of Domitian. The persecution under Nero in 64 and 65 is a documented historical fact',⁶⁴. The 'fact' of the Neroian persecution, while not the only plank in Wilson's argument, is nevertheless an important one. He is not alone in seeing the Neroian persecution as being important to the historical background to the text of Revelation. JAT Robinson⁶⁵ after briefly considering the historical evidence of a Domitian persecution comments, 'when this limited and selective purge, in which no Christian was for certain put to death, is compared with the massacre of Christians under Nero in what two early and entirely independent witnesses speak of as "immense multitudes"', it is astonishing that commentators should be led by Irenaeus, who himself does not even mention a persecution, to prefer a Domitianic context for the book of Revelation',⁶⁶. In contrast to Wilson, Robinson then acknowledges that the preference for a Domitianic date among the majority of scholars⁶⁷ is interrelated to the subject of the relationship of the Christians to the imperial cult. Robinson readily admits that the book of Revelation 'would fit into what we know of his [Domitian] reign',⁶⁸. What he objects to, is the

⁶³ Wilson, op.cit., p587-605.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p605.

⁶⁵ JAT Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London, SCM, 1976) ch8.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p231.

⁶⁷ In fact he states that he only found two scholars at the time of writing who supported an early date

⁶⁸ Robinson, op.cit., p236.

dogmatism of commentators who say ‘that such developments *could* not have occurred till then is misplaced (and unargued)’⁶⁹. On imperial worship and Domitian, Robinson concludes ‘all one can say is that while the evidence from the imperial cultus does not rule out a Domitianic dating, it does not establish it either’⁷⁰. Robinson also contends, that the language of compulsory emperor-worship throughout the world on pain of death is in any case not meant to be taken literally. The role of the seer is to decry, not to describe. ‘What he sees in his vision no more happened in the time of Domitian than in the time of Nero: he is protecting upon the end - the era of Nero *redivivus* - the inevitable outcome of a totalitarian tyranny’⁷¹.

Robinson’s comments about the non-literal account of compulsory emperor-worship on pain of death, suffers from the same problems that have been identified with regard to suffering being described as anything other than literal⁷². On a more fundamental note, both Wilson and Robinson fail to examine the Neroian persecution in the light of the text of Revelation. Both these scholars cite the reference of persecution in Tacitus and the motif of persecution in Revelation, without considering if the persecution in AD64 accords with the description in Revelation. If, as they suggest, the historical background of Revelation fits the Neroian persecution in AD 64, then one would expect to see major points of contact or similarities between the causes of the persecution in Rome and the cause identified by John in Revelation.

Nero’s persecution of Christians at Rome, according to Tacitus was as a direct result of the rumours that he was personally responsible

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p237.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p237.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p237-8.

⁷² See p .

for the great fire of Rome on the 19 July 64⁷³. Although Suetonius openly blames Nero for starting the fire (*Nero* 38), he does not connect the persecution of Christians (*Nero* 16) with Nero's attempt to deflect the rumours that he was responsible for starting the fire. Tacitus is the only ancient author to connect the two⁷⁴:

'Therefore, to put an end to the rumour [that he was the incendiary], Nero supplied [for the sake of diversion] people to be prosecuted, and visited them with extraordinary punishments, people whom the mob loathed for their abominations and called Christians. Christ, the origin of the name, had been punished with the death penalty by the procurator Pontius Pilate under the rule of Tiberius, and the deadly superstition, checked for the moment, broke forth again, not only throughout Judaea, the birthplace of that evil, but even throughout the city of Rome, where all things hideous and abominable came together and find many followers. Therefore, first, those who confessed and, then, on the information supplied by them, a vast number of them were arrested and convicted [or joined together] not so much on the grounds of the crime of arson as for hatred of the human race. In addition, when they were put to death, they were made objects of mockery in that they were covered with skins of wild animals and torn to death by dogs; or they were crucified or burnt, and when daylight failed, they were burned to served as torches in the dark. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle and gave a circus exhibition, mixing with the people like a charioteer or standing in a chariot. Then, although they were criminals and deserved the most exemplary punishments, there arose pity for them as if they were being removed not for the benefit of the state, but to satisfy the savagery of one man' (Tac. *Ann* 15,44).

⁷³ The truth of this, will not be discussed, because it of itself does not focus upon the central issue here, that is, why Nero persecuted the Christians. For a detailed discussion and an interesting argument, see, G Walter, *Nero* (Westport, Connecticut, Greenword Press, 1957) ch9 p144-174.

⁷⁴ See, Sordi, *op.cit.*, p30.

In this famous passage, Tacitus cites the grounds of the persecution of the Christian church at Rome. Nero, who was popular with the ordinary people⁷⁵ had become the centre of a rumour that he not only started the fire but sang his song 'The Sack of Troy' as Rome burned.

Nero's first attempt to reverse the rumours was to hold religious ceremonies to appease the supposedly angry gods⁷⁶. When this failed, Nero turned to the Christian community and implicated them to deflect the rumours surrounding him. Why this group was chosen is not certain. However, from Tacitus' account it would seem as though they were the perfect scapegoats. Tacitus describes them as being loathed by the people, accused of abominations and guilty of deadly superstitions. What is interesting in Tacitus comments about Christianity being at Rome, is his assertion that 'the city of Rome, where all things hideous and abominable come together and find many followers'. It is possible that the Christian community was only one of a number of communities that might have been singled out by Nero. That the Christians were religious may be nothing more than fortuitous for Nero.

Comparing the record of persecution in Rev 13v15-17 and that of Tacitus, there appears to be little correlation between the two. There is no doubt that the Christian community in Rome suffered as a result of Nero's attempt to extricate himself out of trouble; trouble caused by the rumours concerning his part in the Great Fire of Rome in AD64. What is in doubt is the attempt to view this persecution as a backdrop to the Book of the Revelation. Such a position suffers from two difficulties. Firstly, the problem being experienced by believers in Revelation is in direct relation to their refusal to worship the beast. If this worship, either by direct reference or indication of what will be, is linked with the imperial cult, then Nero's own recorded attitude to his divinity is an insurmountable difficulty. As we have noted earlier, Nero rejected

⁷⁵ Griffin, *op.cit.*, p133.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p132.

as late as AD65 a temple to his divinity in Rome or Italy. Rather, he chose instead to deliberately follow the Augustan convention. Nero did not persecute the Christian community because of its refusal to worship his genius but because they were a convenient group to put blame upon. The imagery of a clash between imperial worship and Christianity is completely without credit during the reign of Nero.

Secondly, it is likely that the persecution of AD 64 was confined to Rome itself⁷⁷. While the cult to Nero can be traced outside Italy, the problem facing the Christians in Rome was unique to Rome. Nero had a problem in Rome and Rome was where it needed to be addressed. It is likely that the Christian community in Asia was regarded in much the same manner as in Rome, with great suspicion. However, given Nero's attitude towards his divinity, it is unlikely that there was political gain for other cities in Asia Minor to join in this persecution.

Conclusions

The rise of the imperial cult is directly related to the desire on the part of Greek City states and provinces to gain political favour and advantage. This was a pragmatic approach which became more evident following the deification of Augustus. Also a clear distinction should be made between the attitude of the Greeks and the Romans. To Roman society, it was an acceptable practice to recognise that a worthy emperor had divine qualities, following his death. What was totally inappropriate was to grant divine status to a living emperor. Deification was an honour to be bestowed by a grateful nation, not recognition that an emperor was actually a god.

Apart from Gaius and Domitian, none of the Roman emperors thought of themselves as gods. This specific point is particularly important in considering when the book of the Revelation was written. Gaius' self-delusion about his own deity was used as an excuse by the Greeks in Alexandria to justify their persecution of

⁷⁷ So V Rudich, *Political Dissidence Under Nero: The Price of Dissimulation* (London, Routledge, 1993) p86.

the Jewish minority. It is not a quantum leap to see how a similar situation could arise under another emperor who equally thought of himself as divine.

Domitian was both delusional and extremely capable. With his personal interest in promotion within the Roman Army, it does not require a great leap of imagination to envisage how a situation could arise in which ambitious men would want to impress the emperor. This coupled with the fear that Tacitus and Suetonius record gripped the Roman aristocracy can easily account for the conditions in which the Church could be persecuted. When this is further combined with the reality that religion, politics and economics were interrelated in the ancient world, it is not difficult to see how and why the early Church was persecuted during the later part of Domitian's reign.

It can therefore be maintained, that Revelation should be placed during the reign of Nero. Except that Nero persecuted the Christian community in AD64 and that the Christian community in Revelation is undergoing and facing persecution, the two do not appear to be connected. The persecution in Rome in AD64 was not religiously based. Secondly, the Book of Revelation was written primarily for the

Church in Asia Minor. Therefore the persecution alluded to in it would have little direct bearing with Rome AD64, which seems to have been an isolated and brief, however violent it indeed was. As Tacitus documents the persecution in Rome, it is not a suitable backdrop against which the book of Revelation must be understood.

Genesis, W. Sibley Towner, Westminster Bible Companion, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001 pp.x/296, ISBN 06642522567

The Westminster Bible Companion series describes its purpose as 'intended to help the laity of the church read the Bible more clearly and intelligently'. (p.ix) On the whole this volume on *Genesis* fulfils the aim of the series admirably – indeed many or most clergy could also read this book with considerable profit.

Professor Towner has a felicitous style of writing – and a wide intellectual hinterland that informs his writing with some unexpected insights. He wears his considerable learning lightly. He also implies that he would like to have been able to include representations from art of scenes in *Genesis* – and indeed, given his wide sympathies, he would probably have made good use of such visual material.

He is explicitly writing from a particular theological stance – namely from within the Christian tradition, and within that tradition he represents a broadly Presbyterian perspective (surely to be expected in the Westminster Bible Companion!). He is also clearly writing as an American – in a commentary which uses a considerable number of modern examples as illustrations this comes over quite strongly, for the great majority of them seem to reflect American literature and culture. They occasionally jarred on this British reviewer, and reminded her that America is far more 'foreign' than our common language encourages us to realise. However, since the commentary's (and Professor Towner's) vision is avowedly to offer 'an hermeneutic of contemporary faith enrichment' (p.9) inevitably it needs to relate to one particular geographical context – and understandably Towner has chosen his own.

I was exercised over the Christian faith perspective of the commentary. The volume is quite upfront about it. But I am not sure whether it works – or at least in the way that the commentary has been structured. On a number of occasions there are separate excursuses which explore the Christian interpretation of themes in *Genesis* such as 'Some Further Thoughts on "The Fall"', 'Reflections on Human Alienation', 'Abraham and His Faith in the

New Testament', 'The Akedah in Art'. These I did not find problematical – indeed they worked well as a means of fulfilling the expected church focus of this commentary and the series. But I was not so sure when an explicitly Christian perspective works itself – as it does quite often – into the main body of the text. His invitation to his readers to join his own faith stance – with his regular use of 'we' and 'us' grates slightly *eg* 'God goes with us on our pilgrimage through time and takes some of the kicks and blows that we experience. Nothing demonstrates this fact more clearly than the cross.' (p.85). I kept feeling that I wanted to read my Genesis a bit more straight than Towner was allowing me to do! One or two hints that he throws out in the commentary suggest that he may have been a little uncomfortable about this too. Something of the same applies to the Presbyterian perspective he is offering as well. I could not help wondering how welcome his conclusions in his excursus on 'The Fall' (note the inverted commas) would be to a significant number of Presbyterian Christians. His ultimate, and I believe correct, conclusion is that there is no 'Fall' in the traditional sense in the narrative of Genesis 3 itself.

I have one major and one minor problem with the commentary. The major one is that it felt extraordinary that in a commentary published in 2001 the J,E,D, P hypothesis and the dates proposed for these sources by Wellhausen should still be assumed. Towner offers no clear acknowledgement that such dates – and even sources – are now very widely questioned. Inevitably his assumption affects the whole of his commentary – and though many of the wise and insightful statements he makes would still be valid whatever the date of the so-called 'Yahwist' – others would need to be modified if the 'Yahwist' did not exist or if he did not live in the 10th century. Not to admit the current state of flux on these questions did feel like shortchanging his readers.

My minor problem may seem nitpicking – but I believe there is an issue at stake. The commentary is based on the NRSV and for many chapters the NRSV text is written out – printed in bold. For many – but not for all. Some of the exclusions are texts like genealogies, but other chapters missing their text are key ones such as Genesis 17. There is a note about the rationale for this practice in the series introduction (p.x) although the comment made there that 'usually'

the biblical text is given is a considerable overstatement in the case of this volume. But inevitably such selectiveness helps to create a sense of a canon within the canon – or a first and second class Genesis. Perhaps indeed there are passages in this book that are more important than some others – but I would like to make that choice for myself, and not have it implied for me. Either all the text of the book should be included in the commentary – or none of it.

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Linafelt, T *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Pp x, 180.

This is an unusual book written by a young American scholar who is not afraid to attack recent interpretations of the book of Lamentations and to plough his own furrow. Many scholars have wrestled with Lamentations and have struggled to find a satisfactory explanation to the problems it presents. Linafelt is unhappy with those who see chapter 3 as the centre of the book, the key to interpreting the whole. Far from being the key, chapter 3 takes from the seriousness of the first two chapters. He concentrates his attention on chapters 1 and 2 where the pain and suffering of Zion is expressed in heightened language. This is 'literature of survival', i.e. literature emerging in the aftermath of disaster and written by survivors of that very disaster.

The book begins with an Introduction 'How to Survive the Book of Lamentations' in which Linafelt states how he will proceed. The figure of Zion and her suffering seems to be the focus in Lam 1 and 2, but nowhere else in the book; and it is also what the history of interpretation concentrates on. His explanation of the title of the book is rather tortuous. The same lack of clarity is found in chapter 1 'Matters of Life and Death: Literature of Survival and the Survival of Literature' where the author employs the views of

modern writers such as Derrida to explain and buttress his method. The 'survival of literature' has to do with the generating of literature based on the literature of survival.

In Chapter 2 "'None Survived or Escaped": Reading for Survival in Lamentations 1 and 2', Linafelt tackles life and death in these chapters and the presentation of pain. It is sometimes difficult to know what the author's constituency is. He occasionally explains quite simple terms as though writing for an untutored readership, but at other times, indeed most of the time, he quotes Hebrew and discusses syntax and grammar, which seems to presuppose a quite different audience. An example of the latter is when he discusses the final verse of Lam 5, where the Hebrew is quite obscure. Linafelt makes an interesting observation and translates as though the chapter (and book) ends with a protasis and no apodosis. This suggestion is, I think, unlikely to win over scholarly opinion, but it shows imagination and an independent mind.

Chapter 3 'Living Beyond Lamentations: The Rhetoric of Survival in Second Isaiah' discusses the very pertinent view that Second Isaiah was aware of Lamentations and of the continuing suffering of the people of Judah and that he addressed his message in terms taken from Lamentations. While this is not a new departure, the author explores several ambiguous possibilities and airs their pros and cons in a helpful manner. Chapter 4 'Survival in Translation: The Targum to Lamentations' continues with the survival of literature theme in the paraphrastic rendering of the Targum. This is not a comprehensive look at the Targum. Linafelt feels that the author of Lam 1 and 2 is concerned with the loss of children, and he sees the Targumist as recognising this and advancing it in exegetical expansions. He illustrates this by examining Lam 1.16; 2.20,22, utilising his own translation and that of the Targum. Chapter 5 'Life in Excess: The Midrash on Lamentations' examines the midrashic treatment of Lamentations in the same way. The theme continues in chapter 6 'Poetics of Survival: Eleazar ben Kallir's Medieval Kinot' where Linafelt introduces several of the Kinot from the Jewish Tisha b'Ab liturgy. Chapter 7 deals mainly with a comparison of the mood and language of Lamentations with that of a post-Holocaust story.

This is a book which will, no doubt, stimulate discussion not only on the Book of Lamentations but also on all echoes of it in surviving literature.

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Confessing and Commending The Faith. Historic Witness and Apologetic Method by Alan P.F. Sell (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002). pp.500. No price given.

This is a book of great size and complexity. Its aim is to confess the Christian faith based on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as testified in Holy Scripture. This aspect is relatively straightforward and traditional since it both affirms and commends the faith to believers and non-believers. In these aspects a veritable plethora of beliefs and confession are set out ranging from Reformation emphases, Anabaptists, Quakers, Roman Catholics and others. The writer's own view is a fairly traditional Protestant one where natural theology gives some information about God but only the Christian revelation completes this and gives us full knowledge.

In the second place this faith has to be commended to others. But who are they? They turn out to have a great variety of views e.g., Rationalists, Logical Positivists, Process Theologians and others outwith the faith. They include too fundamentalists and those who base faith on experience and post-modernism.

There are not only these views which are contrary to the faith. The fact of other faiths claiming allegiance and inter-religious dialogue all have to be taken into account. These together with Humanism, New Age views, World views and many others challenge the nature and validity of the Christian faith. Foundationalists are those who have beliefs which they simply hold to be true based on a commonsense rationalism. In Christian theology there is a form of Fideism. But it is well nigh impossible to hold together faith in

God's self-revelation and views accepted on quite other foundations.

The writer therefore maintains throughout a consistent approach which accepts natural theology and the image of God in man but together with these the main emphasis is on the one revelation of God in Jesus Christ. He takes Karl Barth to task for giving exclusivity to God's self-revelation and rejecting the idea of the image being natural to humanity and natural theology. However, Barth's view is that there is only one revelation and word of God in Holy Scripture but that this word as light and truth can be and is testified by God outside the walls of the Church by the Holy Spirit in a way clearly contrary to that of natural theology (see Church Dogmatics IV/3,1, pp. 38-165). In many respects P.T. Forsyth (quoted so frequently in the text by Dr. Sell), 'a Barthian before Barth', Kierkegaard and others virtually share this view of Barth which Dr. Sell seeks to refute.

Given his basis in revelation but accepting natural theology as having some validity together with the *imago dei*, Dr. Sell has gone as far as possible in seeking to provide a Christian Apologetic as well as commending the faith to others. But, is there not more merit in affirming the faith divinely given expressed fully in Jesus Christ and the same message reflected in the world outside by the one Holy Spirit?

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The first chapter contains the author's introduction to the work, which is a study of the human mind and its powers of thought and feeling. The author states that the human mind is a complex and mysterious organ, and that it is the purpose of this work to explore its various functions and powers. He then proceeds to discuss the various faculties of the mind, such as perception, memory, and reasoning, and how they are affected by different conditions and circumstances. The author also discusses the various emotions and feelings that arise from the mind, and how they are influenced by the same conditions and circumstances. The work is written in a clear and concise style, and is intended for a general audience. It is a valuable contribution to the study of the human mind, and is well worth reading.